



# Brandeis University Ombuds

*Supporting an ethical and civil culture encouraging mutual understanding and resolution through respectful dialogue and fair practices.*

## Quarterly Report: July - September 2019

### Office Establishment

---

The Ombuds Office provides support in helping all members (referred to hereafter as “visitors”) of the Brandeis community resolve issues brought to the Ombuds Office. The Office serves as a resource that is confidential, independent, impartial, and informal. The Office was established in December 2017 at the recommendation of the Brandeis Chief Diversity Officer and Vice President of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Dr. Mark Brimhall-Vargas. The concept of a fully-staffed office that would serve the entire campus had its roots in Ford Hall 2015 and the demand by students that there be an Ombuds service for students. The services were broadened when Don Greenstein was hired as the lead Ombuds, joining collateral duty Ombuds, Cathy Burack and Elena Lewis. The three have constituted the Ombuds team and have served the entire Brandeis community.<sup>1</sup> The team has been available to all students, faculty, staff, alumni, and anyone who has a situation, related issue, or conflict involving Brandeis University or anyone having an affiliation with Brandeis.

### Our Reporting Cycle

---

This is the “quarterly” report on the activities of the Brandeis University Ombuds Office, and as such includes data from the months of July 2019 thru September 2019. This quarterly report will only include data from the preceding three months. The office inaugural Annual report for 2018-2019 includes data for the entire fiscal year (July 1, 2018- June 30, 2019) and is posted on the [Ombuds website](#).

Subsequent reports will be released on a quarterly and annual basis. This information is shared throughout the campus community all the way up to the University President to encourage institutional change and fair practice throughout Brandeis University.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cathy Burack has resigned as of July 1, 2019, as her Brandeis Heller research work is taking her outside the country for extended periods of time in the coming year. She made substantial contributions to the team and the Ombuds office that were impactful to our formative stage last year. The University Ombud is currently undergoing a search to replace Ms. Burack with an “as needed” outside (non-collateral duty) Ombuds in the near future.

## Standards of Practice

---

The Ombuds staff practices in accordance with the professional organizational standards of the International Ombuds Association (IOA). The Office's primary purpose is to provide a confidential resource, where visitors can bring their concerns and questions, obtain assistance in self-empowered problem-solving and support in considering their possible options for handling difficult situations. The Ombuds Office also serves as an alternative to formal channels of dispute resolution. Further, the Office provides information, while respecting visitor confidentiality, to the University community on trends, policies or procedures, and patterns of issues that raise concerns so that they may be prevented from recurring or escalating. This report provides information on the milestones and accomplishments of the Ombuds Office during the 1st quarter of the 2019 - 2020 academic year, and includes selected data on visits, referrals, and issues and trends.

## Visitor and Office Statistics

---

### Total number of visitors:

Visits Tables 1, 2 and 3 below show the number of visitors, hours and sessions spent with visitors this quarter.

Table 1: Visitors

Visitor Type	Number	Percent
Students	17	26%
Faculty	8	12%
Staff	38	58%
Alumni	1	.9%
Other	1	.9%
Total	65	100%

Table 2: Time spent with Visitors

Hours spent with Visitors	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Total Hrs.
	2.6	.50	15.0	132

Table 3: Number of sessions spent with Visitors

Number of sessions spent with visitors	1 visit	2 visits	3 or more visits
	23 or 35%	20 or 31 %	22 or 34%

The number of visits per visitor has increased possibly reflecting that the Ombuds Office is serving a purpose in helping people solve some of their concerns such that they return for further support relating to the issues arising for the visitor.

## Primary Issues

Table 4 reflects the categories of primary issues that were addressed during visits.

Note that more than one issue could be identified during a single visit so percentages do not equal 100%.

Table 4: Primary issues (Percentage):

Interpersonal (peer-to-peer personal issue)	7%
Employment (job related issues)	44%
Education (related to faculty, students, classroom issues)	10%
Personal (health, family, self)	10 %
Other <sup>2</sup> (informational or other unique issue/concern)	31%

---

<sup>2</sup> “Other” includes off-campus housing, disability, general campus culture.

## Table 5: Referrals

Primary Referrals Table 5 reflects the referrals made to other offices. Note that more than one referral could be made during a single visit so percentages do not equal 100%.

Chief Diversity Officer	21 %
Campus Police	3 %
Compliance Officer	14 %
Counseling Center	23 %
Dean – Academic	10 %
Disabilities Services	3 %
EAP	11 %
Facilities	1%
Gender and Sexuality Center	2 %
Human Resources	8 %
Health Service	1 %
International Students and Scholars Office	6 %
PARC/Office of Prevention Services	1 %
Provost	4 %
Spiritual and Religious Life	2%
Other (Outside referrals: landlord tenant attorneys, court clerk for small claims or other information, immigration attorneys, counsellors, Assistant Provost, ODEI for Heller, and Graduate Student Services)	8 %

## Conflict Resolution Group Sessions

---

The Ombuds Office is available to offer group meetings to help two or more individuals work through differences and reach an outcome that works for all involved. The Ombuds office facilitated four (4) different informal conflict resolution sessions this quarter.

### Trends

“Trends” is a discussion of recurring themes that are informed by our data and the issues raised by visitors which we believe either signal the need, and/or present an opportunity for intervention or action. Individual issues become “trends” when we recognize that multiple visitors from one or more offices, departments, or schools throughout the University community are coming to the Ombuds office about the same or similar related problems.

The following trends arose this quarter.

**Poor management practices** Managers who have little or no training in management are viewed by subordinates as disrespectful or as bullying when they do not offer performance reviews or feedback. They are frequently directive of staff/faculty with limited discussion. These units have no guiding principles about how a team of people are expected to work together in a positive manner. Training offered by the HR department for managers is not viewed as adequate to prepare managers to be the best they can be.

**Grading Policies:** Concern by students that faculty does not always follow the policy on grading as set out in the faculty and student manuals.

**Mental health concerns** from faculty and students about students and accommodations that are offered are not adequate to meet the health needs of those requiring accommodations.

**Title IX:** Mandated reporters on campus expressed a need for training about reporting requirements and the process for reporting such information shared with them.

**Fear of Retaliation:** International Graduate Students and Undergraduates on campus concerned about reporting any issues for fear of retaliation and loss of work that will have an effect on their Visas. Graduate and undergraduate students working in research environments and undergraduates are of particular concern. Bystanders expressed fears of sharing information about inappropriate behavior on campus.

**Bullying:** This is experienced at all levels of the University, staff on staff, faculty on other faculty staff and students, and students on students. This is a continuing trend on campus that the Ombuds office keeps hearing about.

## Office Accomplishments and Goals

---

Table 6:

Visitors are finding out about the office through a variety of means:

<b><u>How people located the Ombuds Office:</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
Friend or Colleague (peer)	10%
Faculty or Staff (non-peer)	32%
Marketing or Presentation by Ombuds Office	57%
Other (online, website, etc)	1%

## Outreach:

Outreach activities focused on fostering collaborative relationships with other service providers on campus, and speaking with faculty, staff, and student groups.

Outreach efforts this quarter include meetings with, and providing information to the following individuals and groups:

1. Arts and Sciences Dean, Department Chairs
2. Rose Art Gallery
3. Brandeis Counseling Center
4. Heller Managers
5. Heller Staff
6. Human Resources Leadership Team
7. Heller New Student Orientation

9. INstep Program
10. Care Team Partners Fair
11. Woman Sexuality & Gender Studies Faculty
12. International Business School Open House for incoming students
13. BUSAC Staff meeting
14. Undergraduate New Student Orientation
15. Office of Equal Opportunity

## Office Goals: The Ombuds team has established goals for the 2019-2020 academic year.

---

Our primary goal continues to be to serve the whole community in ways that are needed, desired and supportive for community growth in hopes of making Brandeis University a healthy, compassionate, caring, respectful, and productive community.

**Continuing Outreach** The Ombuds team has been meeting regularly and planning marketing meetings with all major offices and constituent groups within the University. The team will continue to schedule and meet with offices and groups on our list and continues to schedule outreach trainings as well as brief meetings with students, faculty and staff. The Ombuds uses the 2019-2020 academic calendar to leverage existing Brandeis events and deadlines to continue promoting our services, and partner with other offices that serve the Brandeis community.

**On-Going Service/Program Evaluation** The Ombuds Office is committed to continuous improvement to ensure we are operating efficiently and effectively as a unit. Over the past two years we began to articulate the Ombuds Office theory of change to allow us to plan how to evaluate our impact on our visitors and the Brandeis community over time. In the short term, we use our confidential visitor feedback survey to inform and strengthen our practices and services in support of the community. Increased Service to the Campus Community We have 4 goals we are working on accomplishing in order to enhance the services we offer to all members of the Brandeis Community.

1. We would like to set up open office hours in specific areas of the campus to make the Ombuds Office more visible and accessible to students, faculty and staff in the coming year. **This may not be possible until there is more staffing and possibly a full time Ombuds in the office.**

2. With one part-time Ombud on staff presently, and one collateral duty Ombud we'd like to add one or more on-call Ombuds to the team to expand the Ombuds team's availability and accessibility to the Brandeis Community. We'd like any new personnel to bring diverse language skills with the ability to translate some of the self-help and marketing materials into the numerous languages spoken on campus by the Brandeis community.

Until that occurs we are translating as much of our written material as we can into Mandarin (priority item) to be followed by other languages spoken by members of our community.

3. We are developing an array of self-help materials for our website on communication, conflict resolution, self-care, harassment and bullying, and discrimination. We have started by posting resources on communication skills on the Ombuds website and as hard copies in our office waiting area.

4. We have implemented offering informal conflict resolution services to individuals and groups. The number of visitors we have seen and the range of issues that have been brought to us underscore the necessity for the Ombuds Office and the need for full time staff in the office. We presently only are able to have staff available to the Brandeis community for 22 hours a week. Our goal is to get in contact with all visitors within 24 hours of their contacting the office for an appointment. At the present time we arrange meetings as quickly as possible and it can sometimes take 2-3 weeks for a face-to-face meeting with a staff ombuds.